

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method for sending a notice that a user is away, the method comprising: determining email addresses of recipients to which email messages have been previously sent within a configurable time period to form a set of determined email addresses, wherein the configurable time period is set by the user; [[and]]

responsive to the user sending an email message to a recipient, storing an email address for the recipient and a date of the email message in the set of determined email addresses, wherein email addresses stored in the set of determined email addresses are removable by the user;

automatically removing the email address for the recipient from the set of determined email addresses if the date of the email message is older than a selected period of time, wherein the selected period of time is set by the user, and wherein the selected period of time is configurable to be the same or different for each stored email address stored in the set of determined email addresses;

responsive to receiving an email message having a same email address within the set of determined email addresses, replying with a notification that the user is away, wherein the notification that the user is away is customizable by the user only in response to receiving an email message having a same email address within set of determined email addresses.

2.-14. (Canceled)